

The background of the slide is a detailed archaeological site plan. It features a grid system with various points marked by 'X' and 'Y' coordinates. Handwritten notes include "GRAVE CUT" and "STILL at top of cut". Measurements such as "2.73'", "3.41'", "2.56'", "3.49'", and "2.60'" are scattered throughout the plan. The plan is overlaid with horizontal bands of color: green at the top, orange in the middle, and red at the bottom.

African BURIAL Ground



"We are applying renewed leadership and priority to the African Burial Ground project and the results we are achieving will lead us to the successful completion of this highly important project. We are definitely focused on completing the African Burial Ground Project prudently, expeditiously and with dignity."

— **Stephen A. Perry, Administrator**
U.S. General Services Administration

"GSA is now poised for the first time in a decade to complete the scientific work, conduct reinterment, construct a memorial, and develop an educational center befitting the site and the city. These are accomplishments long overdue, but when completed will live on in cultural and historic importance for generations."

— **Karl H. Reichelt, Regional Administrator**
GSA Northeast & Caribbean

In 1991, the remains of more than 400 17th and 18th century Africans were discovered during construction of the Foley Square federal building site in New York City. The finding deeply impacted the descendant and broader community and at the same time renewed awareness in cultural significance and historic preservation. Since then, the U.S. General Services Administration has been driven to complete what has become known as the African Burial Ground Project, a major effort to memorialize the legacy of those buried at the site.

Archeologists unearthed the first of the 408 human remains at 290 Broadway in Lower Manhattan and rediscovered the New York African Burial Ground, a rarity in itself because of its prominence as a physical reminder of New York's early African community.

Although historical maps documented the burial ground's existence, time and man had all but obliterated it in less than two centuries. Many initially believed cellars and foundations associated with 19th century building construction had destroyed the cemetery. However, because 20 feet of early 19th century fill was deposited in this area, later construction periods caused only marginal disturbance to the earlier ground surface and the burial ground remained largely intact.



The African Burial Ground originally may have encompassed as much as five to six acres of what is now Lower Manhattan, including City Hall Park. During the 1700's when the burial ground was in use, Africans comprised as much as 14.4% to 20.9% of the population. Consistent with the marginal status of Africans in colonial society, the burial ground was a desolate piece of land located outside of the city limits.

According to city maps, by the late 1700's, the oldest portions of the cemetery were already being covered over by development. As the city expanded, the

existence of the African Burial Ground was eventually forgotten. Today, the site has revealed the remains of hundreds of individuals and thousands of burial artifacts. These were removed for study at Howard University's Cobb Laboratory and other locations. They will be reinterred once scientific work is completed.

Through the community's activism and commitment, the African Burial Ground was awarded designation as a National Historic Landmark on April 19, 1993. As a part of commemorating this important site, the U.S. General Services Administration will construct an Exterior Memorial on the burial ground and an Interpretive Center in 290 Broadway adjacent to the burial ground.

The African Burial Ground Project is an extensive mitigation response to the unexpected discovery of the 300-year-old burial ground. It is a complex project with several main components:

- Scientific research project conducted by Howard University's Cobb Laboratory – GSA continues to work with Howard University to ensure that final manuscript versions of the history, skeletal biology and archaeology reports are delivered on schedule. Howard University will appoint a peer review board to review and comment on the reports, providing a quality assurance review prior to their submission to GSA and the review agencies.

- Office for Public Education and Interpretation (OPEI) for the African Burial Ground – The Office for Public Education and Interpretation continues to provide public outreach and education on the African Burial Ground Project. It provides information via fact sheets, brochures, educational packets and classroom study guides to individuals who visit OPEI offices and other groups upon request. OPEI also conducts lectures on the African Burial Ground project in its office at the federal building at 201 Varick Street, New York, and visits schools and other public groups as well.
- Exterior Memorialization – GSA has commenced planning of an Exterior Memorial upon the African Burial Ground site. A panel of interested parties selected five finalists to compete for the design for the Exterior Memorial. GSA plans to exhibit the

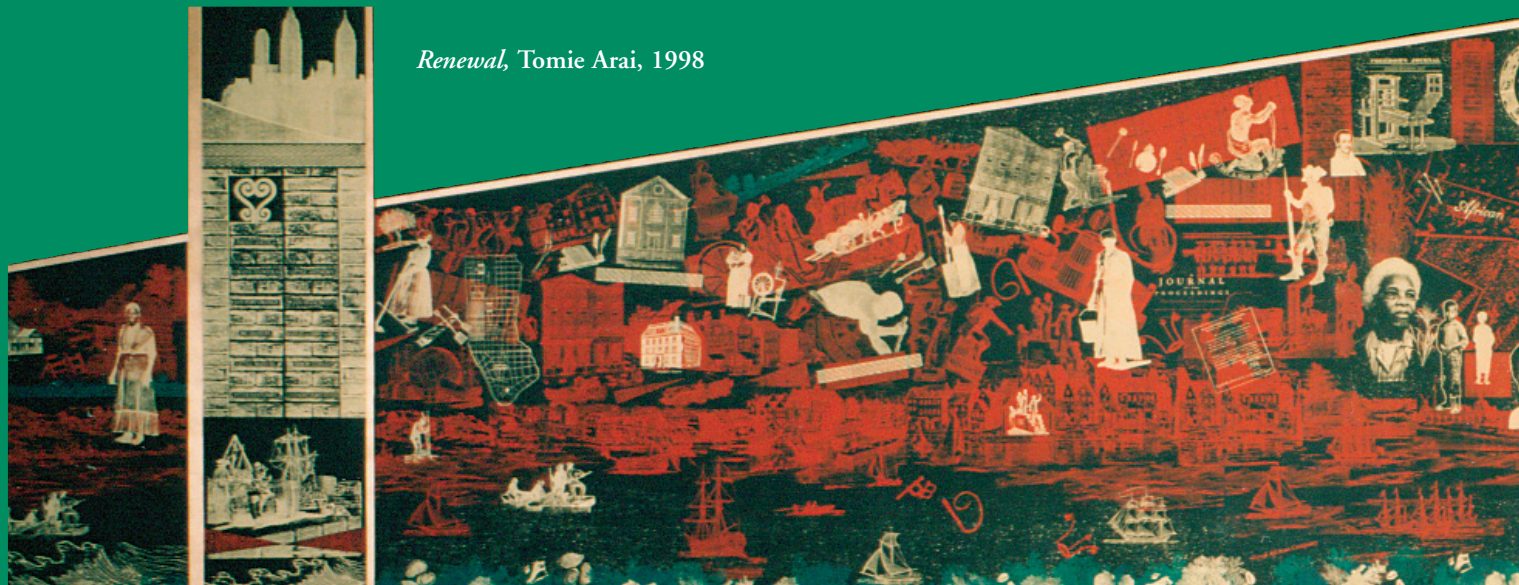
five selected proposals in late Spring 2003 for public review and comment prior to the final selection.

- Interpretive Center – The African Burial Ground is recognized by the National Park Service (NPS) as a National Historic Landmark. GSA has established a working relationship with the NPS to develop an Interpretive Center within the lobby of 290 Broadway, adjacent to the burial ground. NPS will consult on all aspects of the Interpretive Center and will reach out to the public for partnership and ideas. An interpretive environment will be created to inform, engage, and enlighten visitors about the historical, archeological, and cultural findings surrounding the burial ground and New York's ancestral African community. A panel of African-American historians, exhibit designers, and GSA officials have

selected IDI Construction Company Inc. as the contractor to develop the design and construct the Interpretive Center.

- Reinterment of human remains and artifacts currently under study at Howard University – Mindful of the dignity and respect befitting the burial ground, GSA will consult with interested parties, including the New York Public Library -Schomburg Center For Research in Black Culture for the planning and coordination of a comprehensive and inclusive ceremony to be held later in 2003. A ceremony is planned that is ecumenical as well as international in scope, and which showcases the African American experience in New York City.

GSA continues to make great strides in completing this project as evidenced by its progress in 2002. Current projections are



Renewal, Tomie Arai, 1998

that the African Burial Ground Project will be completed in the near future. GSA Administrator Stephen A. Perry has made the successful completion of the African Burial Ground Project one of GSA's highest priorities. GSA has hired the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, under the direction of Dr. Michael Trimble to act as its technical advisor and to guide GSA through the complexities of managing this historic and scientific endeavor.

Meaningful and physical reminders are what we use to keep ourselves close to important events, people, or places. The African Burial Ground is a permanent voice that summons vigilance

in keeping significant the lives, culture, achievements, and contributions of African ancestry in America. Today, the African Burial Ground will endure as a liv-

ing sentinel, steadfast in making forever intolerable the horror of human bondage and the misdeeds of cultural hostility and indifference. The site is to be remembered as a sacred place that will acknowledge for all time those who are buried there. Their sacrifices are never to be forgotten, their spiritual legacies to be cherished and their lives to be proudly celebrated.



Untitled [Inset: mosaic detail]
Roger Brown, 1995





Smarter Solutions

May 2003

U.S. General Services Administration

1800 F Street, NW
Washington, DC 20405

www.gsa.gov